

Secret Service, however, announced that it had not provided such a list. It was wrong.

Compounding this error was the informal process used within the White House to request the reports on pre-printed forms on a routine basis by inexperienced, untrained, and unsupervised personnel with backgrounds as political operatives. These mistakes all fueled the suspicion that Mr. Marceca's requests for confidential FBI background reports of former Republican officials resulted from intentional criminal misconduct rather than bureaucratic ineptitude.

The suspicions proved to be unfounded. Had the Secret Service's contention that it could not have generated the list described by Mr. Marceca remained unchallenged, Mr. Marceca's conduct and testimony appropriately would have been judged in a different light. Fortunately, a portion of the list that Mr. Marceca used was preserved that allowed the OIC to reconstruct with near perfect accuracy the complete list that Mr. Marceca actually followed. The proof of the existence of the list and the OIC's analysis of Mr. Marceca's requests from that list demonstrated that he had not knowingly made false statements in his requests for background reports. This conclusion, in turn, confirmed not only that Mr. Marceca did not engage in criminal conduct himself, but also that there was not a larger scheme within the White House -- allegations of which had necessitated the appointment of an independent counsel in the first place.